



## Chapter Honors Volunteers of Excellence

On Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, the Chapter was honored to be joined by 150 volunteers, donors and sponsors at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual FDR Spirit of Giving Celebration, as we recognized 10 volunteers of excellence for 2014. Attendees enjoyed a delicious dinner and heard from Dr. Vikki Abrahams, a March of Dimes-funded researcher from Yale University and heard firsthand how funds raised impacts her important work.



Congratulations to our 2014 Connecticut Volunteers of Excellence:

### Volunteer of the Year

Debbie Della Valle

### Ambassador Excellence

Kevin and Jessica Repoli

### Heritage Award

Renbrook School

### Humanitarian Award

Pullman and Comley, LLC

### Leadership Award

Evan Cooper

### Mission Triangle Award

Patty Swanson

### Shoreline Legends

Beth Blazeovich and  
Mike Downing

### Top Family Team

Team Evan Spencer  
(Marc & Megan Spencer)

### Trevor Palonen Top Youth Walker Award

Anna Malin

Photos are available on the Connecticut Chapter [Facebook](#) page.

## Chapter Events 2015

### March for Babies

Sunday, April 26

Danbury, East Hartford, New Haven

Saturday, May 2

Mystic

Sunday, May 3

Fairfield, Middlebury, Stamford

### Brunch for Babies

Saturday, June 6

The Riverview, Simsbury

### Signature Chefs Auction

Thursday, October 15

The Riverview, Simsbury

### Real Estate Award Breakfast

Thursday, December 3

The Hilton, Stamford

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## Heart Health

It's February and of course it's the month when we think of heart-related health. Did you know that heart defects are among the most common birth defects, affecting about 1 in 100 babies in the United States? Advances in diagnosis and surgical treatment have led to dramatic increases in survival for children with serious heart defects. In the 1980s, a grantee at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, Charles Kleinman, MD, helped pioneer the use of echocardiography, a specialized form of ultrasound, to diagnose heart defects before birth. This test shows details of the heart's structure, blood flow and even the motions of its tiny valves. If the baby has a heart defect, doctors can plan for any special treatment the baby may need soon after delivery. The test also can show if the baby has an arrhythmia (a heart that beats too fast, too slowly or erratically), which can sometimes lead to heart failure and death. Drug treatment before birth often can correct the arrhythmia and save the baby.



In spite of many advances in treatment, heart defects remain the leading cause of birth defect-related infant deaths. Today's March of Dimes grantees are pursuing a variety of approaches aimed at preventing heart defects and improving their treatment.\*

To read more about research currently funded by the March of Dimes specific to heart defects, please visit the [March of Dimes](#).

\*Content courtesy of the March of Dimes

## It Always Pays to Be Prepared



No. More.  
Snow!

#marchforbabies

January's massive winter storm was another reminder of the harsh weather extremes that we can face in New England. The March of Dimes encourages all families to have a safety plan in case of long-term power outages or evacuations. Pregnant women and new parents should take extra precautions.

Download this [helpful checklist](#) from the March of Dimes to build your disaster kit. And of course storms can also be stressful, but March of Dimes has you covered! Check out this [video](#) with tips about managing stress.

## The Early Bird Gets the Bag

When you raise \$100 or more at [marchforbabies.org](http://marchforbabies.org) before February 28, 2015\*, you will receive this March for Babies drawstring backpack as our gift for getting off to a great start.

Help moms and babies get off to a healthy start too by raising money in March for Babies. Get started early and get rewarded. Register online today at [marchforbabies.org](http://marchforbabies.org). There are seven March for Babies sites in Connecticut so there's one near you!

*\*Credit card or PayPal donations only. No cash or checks.*



## Get to Know Us – Meet Deb Fafard, State Director



### When did you join the March of Dimes and why did you want to be a part of the organization?

I joined the March of Dimes over 8 years ago as a temporary employee to bring the Hartford March for Babies walk (then Walk America) to budget. After successfully completing that task, I was promoted to Division Director and worked my way through the ranks to my current position as State Director. At the time I was hired, I knew very little about the organization or how it impacted my life and helped my preemie (now 26 years old). I quickly learned that I needed to be part of the organization that educated women how to have healthy pregnancies as my way of "paying it forward." If it wasn't for the work of the March of Dimes, my son's story could have been a completely different. Thank you March of Dimes!

### What is one of your most inspiring March of Dimes moments?

My most inspiring moments have been watching some of our very tiny babies leave the NICU and grow to be healthy children.

### Outside of the office, how do you like to spend your time?

My passion outside the office is fitness- from personal training, to motivating people to lead healthy lifestyles by instructing various fitness classes. My favorite thing is cycling long distance with my best friend Alan, participating in road races throughout New England, and leading kayak, hiking, snowshoe and cross country ski adventures in Vermont.

### My favorite March of Dimes event is...

Run for Babies which debuted in 2014 at the Hartford March for Babies event. Join us for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Run for Babies – East Hartford on April 26<sup>th</sup>!

Deb can be reached at 860-815-9355 or by [email](#).